

# **A Statement of Basic Doctrinal Beliefs**

**Foundation Church**

11/22/11

**Table of Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>GOD</b>	
1. The Existence of God	4
2. The Attributes of God	4
3. Our Response	7
4. The Trinity	7
5. God the Father	7
6. God the Son	8
7. God the Holy Spirit	8
8. The Kingdom of God	8
<b>THE BIBLE</b>	
9. God's Word	9
10. The Canon	9
11. The Authority of Scripture	10
12. The Inerrancy/Infallibility of Scripture	10
<b>CREATION</b>	
13. God's Creation	10
14. Angels	10
15. Satan	10
16. Demons	11
17. Mankind	11
18. Male and Female Roles	11
19. Equality of Mankind	11
20. Heaven	12
21. Hell	12
<b>SIN</b>	
22. Sin	12
23. The Fall of Mankind	12
<b>SALVATION</b>	
24. Message of the Gospel	13
25. Atonement	13
26. Adoption	13
27. Regeneration	14

28. Justification	14
29. Sanctification	14
30. Election	15
31. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit	15
32. The Baptism of (with/in) the Holy Spirit	
15	
33. Union with Christ	
15	
34. Perseverance of the Saints (Security)	15

### **THE MINISTRIES OF JESUS**

35. The Four Ministries of Jesus Christ	
15	
35. Reaching & Preaching the Gospel to the Poor	15
36. Physical Healing	16
37. Emotional Healing	
16	
38. Setting Captives Free	16

### **THE MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

39. The Work of the Holy Spirit	17
40. The Filling of the Holy Spirit	17
41. Gifts of the Holy Spirit	17
42. Abuse of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit	17
43. Non-Cessationism	
17	

### **THE CHURCH**

44. The Nature of the Church	
18	
45. The Unity of the Church	18
46. Church Membership	18
47. Government of the Church	18
48. Elders	19
49. Deacons	19
50. Baptism	19
51. Lord's Supper	19
52. Equipping Believers	20
53. Witnessing	
20	
54. Church Discipline	
20	



# **GOD**

## **1. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD**

### **A. Humanity's Inner Sense of God**

1. As people created in the image of God, we have a deep, inner sense that God exists. We recognize that we are His creatures. He is our Creator. Apart from Him we are spiritually dead and have a strong sense that something important in life is missing (Eph. 2:4-5).
2. In the Christian life, this inner awareness of God becomes stronger and more distinct. We begin to know God as our loving Father in heaven (Rom. 8:15) the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16) and we come to know Jesus Christ living within our hearts (Eph. 3:17; Phil. 3:8, 10; Col. 1:27; John 14:23). The intensity of this awareness for a Christian is such that though we have not seen our Lord Jesus Christ, we indeed love Him (1 Peter 1:8).

B. The evidence that God exists is found throughout the Bible (John 1:1).

C. Everything in nature proves clearly that God exists (Rom. 1:20).

D. Only God can overcome our sin and enable us to be persuaded of His existence (2 Cor. 4:4). Human wisdom alone is inadequate to know God on an intimate and personal level (1 Cor. 2:5).

## **2. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**

By His infinite nature, it is impossible for us to fully describe or understand God. He is the great "I am." Any list of His attributes would then be incomplete and inaccurate. But for our understanding we try to provide this partial list of the attributes of God.

### **A. Some of God's attributes are wholly His. They include the following:**

1. God is independent. He does not need us or any of His creation for anything. Nevertheless, we and the rest of creation are allowed to glorify Him and bring Him joy. He is self-existent (Acts 17:24-25). God does not need anything from us (Job 41:11); yet, He delights in His people (Isa. 62:3-5).
2. God is unchanging (Heb. 13:8). He does not change in His being, His plans, His purposes, and His promises. However, God does act and feel emotions and He acts and feels differently in response to different circumstances (Ps. 102:25-27; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17); plans (Ps. 33:11); purposes (Isa. 46:9-11); promises (Num. 23:19). God may choose to respond to intercessory prayer to change circumstances (Acts 12:5-12).
3. God is eternal. He created time and transcends time. Time does not impact God. He has no beginning or end (Ps. 90:2; Job 36:26; Rev. 1:8; John 8:58).

See also Gen. 1:1; John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2). All of time is seen by Him equally and in the same newness (Ps. 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8; Isa. 46:9-10). God sees events in time and acts in time (Gal. 4:4-5; Acts 17:30-31).

4. God is everywhere (Jer. 23:23-24; Ps. 139:7-10). God is present in His whole being, in every part of space (Col. 1:17). God cannot be contained by space (1 Kings 8:27). God can be worshipped anywhere as He is present everywhere (John 4:20; Ps. 139:7-12).
5. God is all powerful. He is able to do anything that is consistent with His nature (Matt. 19:26). He is the Almighty (Gen. 17:1; Ex. 6:3; 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 1:8; 19:6). He cannot be untrue to His nature. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He cannot be tempted to sin (James 1:13). He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13).
6. God knows everything (1 John 3:20). God knows all actual and possible things (Matt. 11:21). God knows everything about our lives even before we are born (Ps. 139:16; Matt. 6:8; 10:30). He knows our every thought (1 Cor. 2:10-11; Ps. 139:1-2, 4).
7. God is sovereign. He is the supreme ruler. His plan (Acts 15:18) is all inclusive (Eph. 1:11). He is in control of His plan (Ps. 135:6) which includes evil, but does not involve Him in that evil (Prov. 16:4), and which ultimately is for the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:14; Rev. 19:6).
8. God is jealous. He continually seeks to protect His relationship with His people (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9).

B. God shares the following attributes with us, though we will never achieve the perfection of these characteristics of God while on earth:

1. God is spirit (John 4:24). There is no place in this universe that can surround Him or contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). He is not to be confined to some image (Ex. 20:4-6). Each of us was created with a spirit (John 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:14;). We are united with the Lord's spirit (1 Cor. 6:17) through the Holy Spirit who bears witness to our adoption into God's family (Rom. 8:16). When we die, our spirit goes to heaven to be with the Lord forever (Luke 23:43, 46; Eccl. 12:7; Heb. 12:18-24).
2. God is invisible. God is a spirit being. (John 1:18; 4:24; 6:46; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16). He manifests His glory to His people (Gen. 18:1-33; 32:28-30; Ex. 13:21-22; 24:9-11; Judges 13:21-22; Isa. 6:1; John 2:11). Seeing Jesus is seeing the Father (John 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). There is the promise that the pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8). We shall see the human nature of Jesus (Rev. 1:7). It is not clear in what sense we will "see" the Father and the Holy Spirit, or the divine nature of God the Son (Rev. 1:4; 4:2-3, 5; 5:6). This is a matter to be revealed when we are in heaven. We are told that it will be "face to face" (Rev. 22:3-4). We shall be changed—we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). This vision is the greatest joy of our existence (Ps. 16:11).

3. God is wisdom. His wisdom is the means to accomplish the best (Rom. 16:27; Job 9:4; 12:13). God's plan of redemption clearly demonstrates His wisdom (1 Cor. 1:20-31). God gives us wisdom when we ask for it (James 1:5). As we study His Word and choose to obey Him we will live a life of wisdom, pleasing to God (Ps. 19:7; Deut. 4:6-8). Our fear, reverence, respect and awe of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). God's wisdom in us produces humility—not pride (Prov. 11:2; James 3:13). We are never as wise as God (Rom. 11:33). Many are the times that we don't understand why, but we must obey in faith as God leads—His wisdom is best (1 Peter 4:19).
4. God is faithful and true. He is the only true God (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). God is faithful to His promises (Deut. 32:4; Num. 23:19; 2 Sam. 7:28;). He always speaks truth. He does not lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Ps. 12:6; Prov. 30:5; John 17:17). His truth in His Word is our guide as His people (Ps. 139:17). His truth is to be our way of living in this world as His people (Col. 3:9-10; Eph. 4:25; 2 Cor. 4:2; Prov. 4:24; Ps. 19:14). We are to love truth and hate falsehood (Ex. 20:16; Ps. 15:2; Prov. 13:5; Zech. 8:17).
5. God is good (Luke 18:19; Ps. 100:5, 106:1, 107:1, 34:8). He is goodness and all that He does is worthy of approval (Ps. 119:68; Romans 12:2). God is the source of all goodness in the world (Ps. 145:9; Acts 14:17). He is the giver of every good thing (James 1:17). He does good things for His people (Matt. 7:11; Rom. 8:32; Heb. 12:10). We are to imitate God in His goodness (Gal. 6:10; Luke 6:27, 33-35; 2 Tim. 3:17).
6. God is love. He gives of Himself in order to bring about blessings or good for others (1 John 4:8). God loves us even though we sin (1 John 4:10; Rom. 5:8; John 3:16;). We are to love God and to demonstrate this love by obeying Him (1 John 5:3, 2:15). We are to love others as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39; 1 John 4:11; John 13:35, 15:13; Heb. 10:24). We do this because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).
7. God is mercy. He demonstrates mercy by His goodness toward those in misery and distress (Heb. 4:16; James 5:11). Moreover, His mercy is demonstrated by His goodness toward those who deserve only eternal punishment (1 Pet. 1:3-5). We are to imitate God in His mercy (Matt. 5:7).
8. God is grace. Grace is freely given by God. This grace underlies God's gift of salvation because it is not earned or deserved by anyone (Rom. 3:23-24, 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9). God's grace is the essence of the Christian life (1 Cor. 15:10).
9. God is patient. It is evidenced in His slowness to anger and by His desire that all have eternal life (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Ps. 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Jonah 4:2; Nah. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:16; Rom. 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9). We should imitate God's patience (James 1:19; Eph. 4:2).
10. God is holy. God is the Most Holy One. He is separated from sin. He is called the "Holy One of Israel" (Ps. 71:22, 78:41, 89:18, 99:9; Isa. 1:4, 5:19, 24). His holiness is the pattern for His people. God's command is for us to allow the

Holy Spirit to impart and develop His holiness in us (Lev. 11:44, 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16).

11. God is peace. He is not a God of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33; Romans 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 2:14; 2 Thes. 3:16). His being and His actions are separate from all confusion and disorder (John 5:17). The Lord desires to bear His fruit of peace within us (Gal. 5:22-23).
12. God is righteous. He always acts in accordance with what is right and He is the standard of what is right (Duet. 32:4; Gen. 18:25; Ps. 19:8; Isa. 45:19). We are to strive to do right and be righteous in the sight of God and man (Ps. 37:3; 1 John 3:10).
13. God hates sin (Rom. 1:18, 2:5-11, 5:9, 9:22; Col. 3:6; 1 Thes. 1:10, 2:16, 5:9; Heb. 3:11; Rev. 6:16-17, 19:15). We are to imitate God and hate sin and evil (Rom. 7:15; Heb. 1:9; Zech. 8:17; Matt. 5:43-48).
14. God is glorious. His glory is the created brightness that surrounds God's revelation of Himself. This is an expression of God's greatness and of His excellence (Ps. 24:10, 104:1-2). We should reflect His glory. By focusing on Christ we can be transformed to reflect His glory (2 Cor. 3:18).



### **3. OUR RESPONSE**

#### **A. Knowing God**

1. We can never, in this life, fully understand God. We shall never stop growing in our knowledge of God. We will never run out of things to learn about God. We shall never tire in delighting in the discovery of more and more of His excellence and the greatness of His work. Our great occupation in life is to constantly increase in our knowledge of God (Phil 3:8-11).
2. We need to be aware that God is revealing Himself to us. We completely depend on God's active communication to us in Scripture, and through the Holy Spirit, for our true knowledge of God.
3. We can know God personally.
  - a. We have true knowledge of God from Scripture, even though we do not have exhaustive knowledge. We know God in our love relationship with Him (Jer. 9:23-24). Our sense of joy and our sense of importance come from the fact that we know God personally (John 17:3; Heb. 8:11; 1 John 5:20; Gal. 4:9; Phil. 3:10; 1 John 2:3, 13; 4:8).
  - b. God personally dwells among us and within us to bless us (John 14:23; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

#### **B. Fearing God**

God is awesome and powerful. We, His people, should hold Him in highest reverence without equal or peer. In this attitude of reverence and highest honor we are said to "fear" God (Gen. 22:12, 42:18; Ex. 18:21; Job. 1:9; Ps. 66:16; Eccl. 5:7, 8:12-13; Luke 23:40; Acts 13:16, 26; 1 Peter 2:17; Rev. 14:7)

### **4. THE TRINITY**

We have a finite ability to understand infinite concepts. Thus, when we seek to discuss the subject of the Trinity, we are entering a subject for which we can have only a limited comprehension. Nevertheless, it is helpful to understand that God has always existed as more than one person. God exists in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet, He is absolutely one. All the persons of God are completely God, all are distinct, and all are unified. Three statements summarize the Bible's teaching on this subject:

- 1) God is three persons.
- 2) Each of these three persons is completely God.
- 3) There is only one God. Though not a term found in the Scripture, the Trinity is repeatedly revealed. The distinct persons of God primarily exist in relation to His creation. God relates to His creation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:26, Matt. 3:16-17, 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6).

### **5. GOD THE FATHER**

A. God's role as the Father relates to the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as creation, as the one who commands, directs and sends. The Father is over all, to include the Son and the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:6).

B. God is the Father of believers in Christ (Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:5).

C. He disciplines us as His children for our good, so we may share His holiness (Rev. 3:19).

## **6. GOD THE SON**

Jesus is a completely unique person in that He is both fully God and fully human.

- A. The humanity of Christ must first consider His miraculous conception and virgin birth (Matt. 1:18, 20, 24-25; Luke 1:35).
- B. This miraculous conception and virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person (Matt. 1:22-23; Gal. 4:4-5).
- C. In His humanity, Jesus had human limitations. He had a human body, mind and emotions.
  - 1. Jesus had a human body (Luke 2:7, 40, 52).
  - 2. He would get thirsty (John 19:28).
  - 3. He would grow weary and tired (John 4:6).
  - 4. He had an appetite and would be hungry (Matt. 4:2).
  - 5. He had limited strength (Luke 23:26).
  - 6. He had a human mind (Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:8).
  - 7. He had human emotions (Matt. 8:10; John 11:35, 12:27, 13:21).
- D. Jesus' experiences as a man, His suffering and death, enable Him as our High Priest to completely understand by His experience what we are experiencing (Heb. 4:15-16; 1 John 2:6).
- E. Jesus was completely sinless, even while he was a man (John 15:10; Romans 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).
- F. Jesus' humanity was required so He would become the substitute sacrifice for us (Romans 5:18-19; 1 Cor. 15:45, 47; Heb. 2:16-17).
- G. Though He was fully human, Jesus was fully God (John 8:58; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:2-8).
- H. We believe that at a time known only to the Father, Christ will return to the earth (1 Thes. 4:15-17; Rev. 19:11-16; Matt. 24:29-31; Acts 1:11).
- I. Christ is our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

## **7. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- A. The Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity and is equal to the Father and Son, while remaining distinct from these persons of the Trinity. He is fully God with all the same attributes (Matt. 28:19; John 14:26; 2 Cor. 2:4, 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; Jude 1:20-21).
- B. The Holy Spirit is a person with intelligence (1 Cor. 2:10-11; Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 2:13), feelings (Eph. 4:30) and a will (Acts 16:6-11; 1 Cor. 12:11).
- C. The Holy Spirit guides us into truth (John 16:13), convicts us of our sin (John 16:8), performs miracles (Acts 2:1-6) and intercedes for us with the Father (Rom. 8:26).
- D. The Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and Son (John 16:14).

## **8. THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

- A. The Kingdom of God is God's sovereignty over His creation. His Kingdom literally extends into human lives when we submit to Him as Lord (Luke 17:20-21).
- B. God is King of all who willfully acknowledge Him as their eternal Lord and Savior (Ps. 5:2; 1 Tim. 6:15).
- C. As His people, we pray and labor that His Kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).
- D. With the return of Jesus Christ to earth and the end of this age, the Kingdom of God shall be complete (Rev. 21:1-4).

## **THE BIBLE**

### **9. GOD'S WORD**

The Bible is God's Word. These are God's own words, even though written down by human authors. They are absolutely authoritative (Ps. 12:6, 119:105, 160; Prov. 30:5; John 1:1-3; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12).

### **10. THE CANON**

The Canon of Scripture is the list of all the books in the Bible. It is very important to know which writings belong in the Bible and which do not. The importance is because the Scripture is a primary source of our nourishment for our spiritual lives. To be any less or any more than what God has intended would be wrong.

- A. The Old Testament was not disputed in the writings of the New Testament. Most importantly, there is full agreement with the Old Testament by Jesus and the Apostles. They often quoted from the Old Testament as recorded in the New Testament (Matt. 4:1-11; Acts 2:14-21; 13:40-41; 1 Cor. 2:9).
- B. The New Testament focuses on the coming and works of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The Apostles were given the amazing gift to remember all things that Jesus had said and were guided by the Holy Spirit to record those things He willed to be preserved (John 16:13-14). Paul also claims the revealing of the truth through the Holy Spirit in his writings (1 Cor. 2:12-13). The Apostles (including Paul) wrote all but five books of the New Testament: Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews and Jude. The early church fathers determined that in order for a book to be included in the Canon, it was absolutely necessary for it to have divine authorship. They determined that based upon John 16:13-15, authorship by an apostle was divinely inspired. Thus, if the writings can be shown to be by an apostle, it has divine authorship. So all but five of the books were automatically accepted by the early church. Of these remaining books, all were written at a time when the apostles could have and would have affirmed the divine authorship through these other authors. Peter would have affirmed the authorship of Mark as containing the gospel that he himself preached. As for Hebrews and Jude, they were considered to be self attesting.

- C. The Canon is closed. Once the writings of the New Testament apostles and their authorized companions were completed, we had in written form the final record of everything that God wants us to know about the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and its meaning for the lives of believers for all time. We must heed the warning of Revelation 22:18: "I warn every one who hears the words of prophecy for this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share of the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." The primary reference is to the book of Revelation, yet its placement at the end of the last book of the Bible should not be ignored.

## **11. THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE**

- A. The Bible is the ultimate authority for our faith and practice. God's leadership in all matters will agree with and never contradict the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). All the words in Scripture are God's words. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16).
- B. The authority of Scripture means that all the words of Scripture are God's Words. Therefore to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. Thus, Jesus can rebuke the disciples for not believing the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:25; 2 Peter 3:2).

## **12. THE INERRANCY/INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE**

Scripture is Truth. God does not lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). Since God does not and cannot lie, the Bible is truth in all respects (Ps. 12:6; Prov. 30:5; Ps. 119:89; Matt. 24:35; Num. 23:19). His Word is truth (John 17:17).

## **CREATION**

### **13. GOD'S CREATION**

- A. Everything exists by God's power (Jer. 10:12; Rev. 4:11).
- B. God created everything from nothing. Before God created the universe nothing else existed except God himself. All things ultimately belong to Him (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6, 9; John 1; 3; Acts 4:24, 14:15, 17:24-25; Col. 1:16).
- C. All things are sustained by the power of God (Job 12:10; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

### **14. ANGELS**

- A. God created angels (Neh. 9:6).
- B. Angels carry out some of God's plans on the earth (Psalm 103:20-21). They bring messages (Acts 8:26), patrol earth as God's representatives (Zech. 1:10-11), carry out war against demonic forces (Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7-8), and carry out some of God's judgments (Acts 12:23).
- C. Angels are not to be worshipped (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).

### **15. SATAN**

- A. Satan is a literal being known by several titles including: Satan, the devil, Beelzebul, the thief, the murderer, the liar, and the adversary (Matt. 4:1; 12:24; Luke 11:18; John 8:44; 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8).
- B. He is the originator of sin and father of lies (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8). He attempts to destroy every work of God (John 10:10).
- C. In his war against God, he uses a variety of approaches (John 10:10; Rev. 12:9; 1 Peter 5:6).

- D. However, Satan and his demons are subject to Christ and to us in His name (Luke 10:17; Eph. 1:19-23; 6:11).
- E. Because his time is limited, Satan's intentions are carried out with great wrath (Rev. 12:12).

## **16. DEMONS**

Demons are evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world (2 Peter 2:4).

- A. Demons are organized by Satan and do his bidding (Eph. 6:12).
- B. Demons have the capacity to "demonize" individuals and influence their lives (Mark 5:1-20; Acts 16:16-18).
- C. Demonization is the relative control of Satan, over, or in, an individual's life. There is a wide spectrum of this control, ranging from annoyance to complete domination. The Bible teaches that humans can be influenced by demons to commit evil and sinful acts (2 Tim. 2:26).
  - 1. Demons attack our minds to gain a foothold in our lives (2 Cor. 10:3-7). It is possible for a Christian to be demonized, that is to say, influenced by demons. In Eph. 4:27, Paul writes "and do not give the devil an opportunity." The word "opportunity" is the Greek word *topos*, meaning place, abode or dwelling. The indication is that a place of opportunity can be given to Satan, from which he can use the believer as an obstacle to God's plans and activity.
- D. Demons know Jesus, recognize their fate and respond obediently to Jesus' commands (Luke 4:33-36).

## **17. MANKIND**

- A. God created human beings to live in a special love relationship with Him, both here and now, and in heaven forever (John 10:10; Rom. 6:4-11; Rev. 21:3-7; 22:3-5).
- B. Our highest purpose in life is to love God (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:28-30).
- C. Mankind is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Human beings are made up of these parts: the body is that aspect of our life that relates to the world around us. The soul is made up of mind, emotions and will. It is through the soul that we relate to ourselves. Finally, the deepest part of man is the spirit. The human spirit is that aspect of life that relates directly to God and receives the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 15:45; 1 Thes. 5:23).

## **18. MALE AND FEMALE ROLES**

Mankind, as male and female, is created in God's image reflecting harmony, equality and yet differences in role and authority.

- A. God illustrated equality by creating both male and female in His image (Gen. 1:27, 5:1-2). As men are dependent on women, and women are dependent on

men, both are equally important and worthy of honor (1 Cor. 11:11, 12). While there are differing roles for men and women, we are nonetheless, one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

### **19. EQUALITY OF MANKIND**

Equality among races, social and economic strata and gender is emphasized in scripture. Therefore, any form of discrimination or bigotry is sinful (Gal. 3:27-28; James 2:2-9).



## **20. HEAVEN**

Heaven is a literal place where God dwells. It is here that all true believers will spend eternity in the presence of God and in fellowship with one another. Heaven is a place of eternal reward, worship and great joy (Matt. 5:12; Luke 23:24 & 43; John 14:2-3; Rev. 21:3-7; 22:3-5).

## **21. HELL**

The Bible also teaches that hell is a literal place. It is the final and eternal place of punishment for Satan, his demons, and all those who die without Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is a place of eternal separation from God in torment (Matt. 5:22; Mark 9:47; Luke 12:5; 16:23-26; Rev. 19:20; 20:10 & 11-15).

## **SIN**

### **22. SIN**

Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude or nature. Sin is the choice to rebel against God. This rebellion can be either our actions or our neglect. The result of this rebellion is disharmony with God for the Christian and condemnation for the non-Christian. Sin is something that all humans do.

- A. All of mankind has sinned or will sin (Rom. 3:23).
- B. While our salvation as Christians is eternally secure (John 10:28), sin, nevertheless, causes disharmony with God for the Christian (Rom. 6:23, 8:1). Our sin disrupts our fellowship with God. Not only is our personal relationship with God affected, but our sin damages our relationships with others and our ministries (John 15:4).
- C. Sin includes individual acts—stealing, lying, committing murder—illustrated by the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17). Sin also includes acts of omission, being disobedient when God tells us to do something, either through His Word or through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Sin includes wrong attitudes—coveting, desires to do wrong, anger, lust, jealousy and selfishness (Ex. 20:17; Matt. 5:22, 5:28; Gal. 5:19-21).
- E. Sin is part of our very human nature (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:3).
- F. The penalty of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Death means separation from God. Thus, for the non-Christian, death will cause his/her eternal separation from God (Rom. 1:18). But the believer in Christ will be spared this punishment (John 3:16; 11: 25-26).

### **23. THE FALL OF MANKIND**

- A. The Origin of Mankind's Sin—the origin of sin was the act of Adam and Eve consciously choosing to disobey God when tempted by the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 16; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14).

- B. Inherited Sin—due to Adam’s disobedience, sin and death entered the human race (Rom. 3:23; 5:12, 12-21; 6:23).
- C. Man’s Voluntary Choice—God is not to blame for our sins and Satan is not the exclusive source of our sin. We must recognize that sin is our voluntary act (James 1:14-15).

## **SALVATION**

### **24. MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL**

- A. The simple facts of the gospel are as follows:
  - 1. All of us have sinned (Rom. 3:23).
  - 2. The penalty for our sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
  - 3. Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:8).
  - 4. Because of God’s mercy, grace and love for the sinner, Jesus issues an invitation to each of us for salvation that requires a response. That response requires us to believe that Jesus is God’s son and receive Him (John 1:12). This is done through faith and not by our own works (Eph. 2:8-9).
- B. The message of the Gospel is that God so loved us that He gave His Son to pay the penalty for our sin. The Gospel includes an invitation for us to make a conscious decision to abandon our sins and to come to Christ fully trusting (faith), asking Him to forgive us of our sins (Luke 24:27; Acts 2:37, 3:19, 5:31, 17:30; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10). The glorious message of the Gospel is the promise of forgiveness of our sins and eternal life with God (John 3:16; Acts 3:19). God’s promise and assurance is “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Christ will accept all who come to Him in sincere repentance and faith seeking salvation (John 6:37).

### **25. ATONEMENT**

The Doctrine of atonement relates to Jesus dying to pay the penalty for our sins. This includes:

- A. God’s justice required that a penalty be paid for our sin (John 14:6; Eph. 2:8).
- B. God’s love caused Jesus to pay that penalty (Rom. 3:25-26).
- C. Jesus lived a sinless life in perfect obedience to God the Father (2 Cor. 5:21), and died a substitutionary death for our salvation (Gal. 3:13; 1 John 2:2).
- D. God’s love brought Jesus as the atonement from our sins (John 3:16).

### **26. ADOPTION**

- A. Adoption is an act of God, not of our own power (John 1:12).

- B. When we accept Christ as Lord and Savior, we are made members of God's family (Rom. 8:14-17).
- C. As adopted sons and daughters, we have a loving and wise heavenly Father who watches over us, provides for us, and protects us (Matt. 6:9; 1 John 3:1; Ps. 103:13-14; 2 Thes. 3:3).
- D. Adoption establishes an eternal relationship with Jesus as our elder brother. Other Christians are our brothers and sisters in Christ (Rom. 1:13, 8:12; 1 Cor. 1:10, 6:8; James 1:2; Matt. 12:50; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 7:15; Phil. 1:2; James 2:15). As we are brothers and sisters, the concept of church must take on a new perspective as we are engaged in "family work." No competition, no jealousy, no hindering of others in obeying our Father; we are to be encouragers and thankful for the good that comes to our "family" for all are to be contributing to the good of the family and imitating God our Father (Eph. 5:1; 1 Peter 1:14-16).

## **27. REGENERATION**

Regeneration is an act of God alone in which He literally gives us a new spiritual life. This is called being "born again" (1 Peter 1:3; John 3:3-8; Ezek. 36:26-27).

- A. This is an act totally of God alone; we play no part in this (John 1:12-13).
- B. Though we may not understand regeneration, we do know that we were spiritually dead, not caring about spiritual things (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 3:11), and a change occurred, which we did not control, as God made us alive to Him. We were born again to relate to God in prayer and worship and enabled to hear and understand his Word with receptive hearts (John 3:3-7; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13).

## **28. JUSTIFICATION**

- A. Justification is God declaring us righteous in His sight (Rom. 3:20, 26, 28, 5:1, 8:30, 10:4, 10; Gal. 2:16, 3:24).
- B. Forgiveness of our sins and being righteous in His sight are both essential for God's justification (Rom. 4:6-8; Rom. 3:21-22).
- C. We are declared just by God because He considers Jesus Christ's righteousness as belonging to us (Rom. 4:3).
- D. Justification is a gift of God's grace not on account of something that we do or earn (Rom. 3:23-24; Eph. 2:8-9).
- E. God justifies us through our faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:25, 26, 5:1, 17-19).

## **29. SANCTIFICATION**

We believe that the Christian is declared righteous by God through faith in Christ. This is referred to as "positional" sanctification. Because we are in Christ, and He is righteous, we are righteous. Yet there is also such a thing as "practical" sanctification.

In practice, our daily life is to reflect our position. Some try to produce this holy life via legalism. While the attempt may be sincere, it is also doomed to failure. In reality, “practical” sanctification is achieved the same way “positional” sanctification is realized, by grace, through faith.

- A. Practical sanctification increases throughout our lives as Christians. It is a progressive work of God in man that increases our freedom from sin and grows us into a likeness of Christ in our daily lives (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil 3:13-14).
- B. Sanctification is primarily the role of God (1 Thes. 5:23). God’s role includes disciplining His children (Heb. 12:5-11). God causes us to want His will and to work for His pleasure (Phil 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21).
- C. Our role is both one in which we depend on God to sanctify us and one in which we strive to obey God (Passive: Rom. 6:13, 12:1, 8:13) (Active: Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 12:14; 1 Thes. 4:3; 1 John 3:3; 2 Cor. 6:14, 18, 7:1; 2 Peter 1:5).
- D. Sanctification affects our entire being. It affects our intellect and our knowledge (Col. 3:10; Phil. 1:9; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:5). Growth in sanctification will affect our emotions (Gal. 5:22; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 John 2:15; Rom. 6:17; Eph. 4:31). Our decision making, our will, is changed by God working in us (Phil 2:13). Our spirit will be affected (1 Cor. 7:34; 2 Cor. 7:1). And our physical bodies will be affected (1 Thes. 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Cor. 13, 19-20).

### **30. ELECTION**

God Himself performs all the work of salvation. The only human component of salvation is the act of receiving Christ as Savior and Lord.

### **31. THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

At the moment of salvation every believer receives the Holy Spirit as an eternal indwelling presence (Acts 2:1-4; Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 12:13).

### **32. THE BAPTISM OF (WITH/IN) THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Baptism of the Holy Spirit also occurs at the time of salvation. This is the placing of a new Christian into Christ. We become members of the one body of believers in Jesus Christ and as part of Jesus Christ. The evidence of this is the manifestation of the life of Christ in and through us (Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13).

### **33. UNION WITH CHRIST**

Union with Christ describes aspects of our relationship with Christ as believers through which we receive the benefits of salvation. This inseparable union is the basis of God’s work in the believer’s life and includes the following:

- A. We are in Christ (John 15:5 Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:28).

- B. Christ is in us (Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27).
- C. We are like Christ. We imitate Christ in our union with Him (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 John 2:6; Phil. 1:20).
- D. We have a personal fellowship with Christ in our union with Him (Matt. 18:20, 28:10). It is great joy to know that Christ actually wants us to be with Him (John 17:24).

### **34. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS (SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER)**

All those who are truly born again are secure in Christ, being kept by God's power as His child. He will keep us as His children for the rest of our lives and for all eternity (John 10:27-29).

- A. Salvation in Jesus Christ brings eternal life (John 3:36, 5:24, 6:47, 10:28; 1 John 5:13).
- B. The Holy Spirit within us is the guarantee of our inheritance of eternal life with Christ in heaven (Eph. 1:14).
- C. Since salvation is not dependent upon the actions of the believer, true believers cannot lose their salvation (1 John 5:11-13; 1 John 2:19).

## **MINISTRIES OF JESUS**

### **35. THE FOUR MINISTRIES OF JESUS CHRIST**

We believe that four primary ministries of Jesus Christ are listed in Luke 4. Since Christ left His Church in the world to be His body, and perform His ministry, we must pay special attention to these four initiatives.

### **36. REACHING & PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR**

The first of these ministries is preaching the gospel to the poor. We must choose to reach out to those in financial need. Many of the most heinous conditions, addictions and iniquities are found among those afflicted by poverty. When the gospel is effective among the poor, it can be effective at any other stage of society. (Luke 4:18; Mt. 6:1-4; 19-20; 1 John 3:17-18; John 5:17; 19-20; 30; 6:38; 8:28-29; 14:12; 16; 26; 20:21; Mk 10:46-52; Luke 4:43; 18:22; John 9:1-12; James 2:5; Prov. 18:15-16; Mt 19:21; Mk 14:7; Rom 8:14; 12:13; 1 Cor. 12:7; 2 Cor. 8:12; 9:7-9)

### **37. PHYSICAL HEALING**

We believe that the ministry of physical healing is an important part of the work of God. While it is not God's will to heal everyone of every disease this side of heaven, it is His will to heal some, if not many. Prayer for the sick is a significant assignment for the church, and it is a vital part of our Elders' Ministry. (Luke 4:18; Mt 8:16; 9:33; 12:22; Mk 5:2-5; 9:17-29; John 5:14; James 5:15-16; Luke 4:40-41; 6:18; 13:11-13, 16; 16:19-25; John 9:3; 11:4; Acts 10:38; Gal 4:13; Luke 22:40-46; Acts 9:34-35; 39-42; 2 Cor 12:7-10; Mt 9:2; 22; 29; Mk 5:34; 6:56; 10:52; 5:20; 7:9-10; Mt 8:17; Luke 18:42; Acts 3:16; 4:9-10; 14:9; 1 Cor 12:9; Phil 2:27; James 5:13-16; Luke 10:34; Mt 11:3-5; Mk 2:10; 5:19; Luke 7:22; 9:2; John 5:36; 9:4-5; Luke 16:19-25; John 11:25-26; 40-45; Acts 10:38)

### **38. EMOTIONAL HEALING**

We believe that the ministry of emotional healing is also an important aspect of the focus of the church. Emotional disturbance and pain afflicts many people in our society. The healing of many emotional difficulties are found in Christ. Through prayer, learning and applying spiritual truths, and taking our thoughts captive into obedience to Christ we experience this wonderful deliverance. (Luke 4:18; Mt 6:25-34; Rom 5:1; 2 Cor. 10:5; Gal 5:22-23; Phil 4:6-12; Col 3:15; 1 Tim 6:6; Rom 3:23-25; 4:25; Rom 5; Rom 6; 8:30; 8:35-39; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:17; 10:5; Gal 2:15-17; John 14:19; Gal 2:20; 3:24; Phil 1:21; Titus 3:7; Isa 41:10; Mt 21:22; Mk 9:29; 11:24; Luke 11:9-10; 18:1; 22:46; Acts 1:14; 10:31; 12:5; Rom 12:12; Eph 6:15; 6:18; 1 Thes. 5:17; Heb 4:1-10; Luke 22:32; Acts 2:42-44; 1 Cor. 1:9-10; Gal 2:9; 5:22-23; Phil 2:1-2; 1:4-7; 1 Pet 4:8; 1 John 1:3-4; 1:7)

### **39. SETTING CAPTIVES FREE**

We believe that many people are in spiritual captivity. Christ has come to set us free from this enslavement and to empower us to live in our freedom. This is an important part of the work of God in our world today. (Luke 4:18; 3:17-19; John 3:14-21; 8:12; 8:34-35; 10:27-28; Rom 3:23; 5:12-14; 5:17-21; 6:3-4; 8:1-2; 8:37-39; Rev 12:10-11; Mt 10:1; 10:8; Mk 6:7; Mk 6:13; Luke 9:1-2; 9:6; 10:17-20; Acts 8:6-7; 1 John 4:4; Isa 14:12-15; Mk 1:13; Luke 4:1-13; John 8:44; 2 Cor 2:9-11; 4:26-27; 6:12-13; 2 Pet 2:4; 1 John 3:8; Jude 1:6; Rev 12:10-11; 13:6-7; John 3:3; 3:16-17; 12:32; Eph 2:4-6; James 4:7-8; 1:12; John 8:32; 14:6; 15:26; 16:13; Eph 6:14; 2 Thes 2:13; Luke 5:17; 6:19; 9:1; 10:19; Acts 1:8; 4:7-10; 10:38; Rom 1:16; 2 Cor 12:9; Eph 3:16-19; Phil 3:21; Col 1:11; 2 Tim 1:7).

### **THE MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

#### **40. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit's work can be stated in broad and general terms. He, as the indwelling person of God, purifies, empowers, blesses, reveals, keeps and unifies Christians with one another. One of the driving forces in the work of the Holy Spirit is to magnify Christ (Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:25; Rom. 8:26-27; Phil. 2:12-13).

#### **41. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The filling of the Holy Spirit begins at salvation and continues as we yield more control to the Holy Spirit to be empowered by Him to accomplish great and mighty things. The progressive yielding to the Holy Spirit is life changing. The world is yet to see all that God can accomplish through a life completely yielded to Christ and being filled with the Spirit.

- A. Yielding to the Holy Spirit is a voluntary act by a Christian seeking to grow by becoming more like Christ (1 Cor. 12:31, 14:1, 12).
- B. Being filled with the Holy Spirit empowers us to accomplish great and mighty things. Acts reveals a number of these special events of great and mighty things in the early church (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 23, 31).
- C. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a one time thing. It can be a recurring special event or it may be realized as a progressive growth that engenders increasing sanctification for the believer (Acts 4:8, 7:55 [recurring individual event], 6:3, 11:24 [progressive growth]).

#### **42. GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit endows every Christian with at least one spiritual gift at the moment of salvation. A spiritual gift is a special God-given ability to serve the Lord with relative ease and effectiveness. There are at least three lists of spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament. They are found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Peter 4. There is no biblical evidence that certain gifts have ceased to operate, however some gifts are more rigorously controlled than others. This does not annul the fact that the use of spiritual gifts is essential to the ministry of the church (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Cor. 14; 1 Peter 4:11).

#### **43. ABUSE OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Every spiritual gift can be abused through overemphasis, self-aggrandizement or the efforts of the flesh to promote self. Love must be the primary factor in the use of any gift. The use of a spiritual gift in public is for the edification of all who are present (1 Cor. 13, 1 Cor. 14).

#### **44. NON-CESSATIONISM**

God continues to gift believers and perform miraculous acts as He did in the first century. We must not try to put God in a box. It is our responsibility to use our God-given faith and trust Him to act in power. However, we are not to become preoccupied with spiritual gifts. The Giver of the gifts is our preoccupation, not the gift. We recognize that every spiritual gift can be perverted, overemphasized and counterfeited. The gifts of God and their manifestations are to follow biblical guidelines. Whatever the challenges might be, the fact that God is still working today makes it all worthwhile. An individual's personal views on cessationism shouldn't be a

point of contention or break fellowship between believers. See Elder Council position paper entitled "Cessationism and Non-Cessationism."

## **THE CHURCH**

### **45. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

"The Church" has two meanings. First, there is the "universal Church" made up of all true believers in Christ, of all time. Second, there is the "local church" made up of all local believers who congregate together for common edification and ministry. The purposes of the church are to worship God, nurture and mature believers, and offer evangelism and mercy to the world (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 16:5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

### **46. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH**

Christian unity is extremely important and should be sacrificed only in the case of essential biblical doctrine (2 John 10-11). Our unity is born out of our common relationship with Christ. He is in us; we are in Him, which makes us one (John 17:21; 1 Cor. 1:2). There is room in the fellowship of the church for disagreement. However, there is not room in the church for divisiveness. Divisiveness must be addressed in a very forthright way (Titus 3:10-11). It is the duty of every Christian to preserve the unity of the faith in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

### **47. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Church membership is a God-led choice to unite with a body of believers and serve as a living appendage of that body. In general, membership will be granted to anyone who offers a biblical testimony of salvation has been scripturally baptized and agrees to accept the responsibilities of membership. These responsibilities include:

- A. To pursue a holy lifestyle, surrendered to the Lord's leadership.
- B. To pursue Christ-like relationships with FC members.
- C. To pursue a life of ministry and service within FC. This includes the investment of time, talents, spiritual gifts and financial resources. (Eph 2:19; Rom 12:3,2; I Cor. 12).

### **48. GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH**

Our church government is "theocratic" in nature. This means that the Lord Himself governs the church. In His sovereignty, God has established two church offices— elders and deacons. Elders are called by God to serve as humble servant leaders and under-shepherds of Christ (1 Tim. 3:1-5, 17; 1 Peter 5:4; Titus 1:5). Deacons serve as the called ministers of mercy to the church family (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Church members are called on by God to submit to the leadership of these leaders, unless such submission (Heb. 13:17) would be clearly unbiblical, immoral, or illegal. The leadership of the elders is to be established by consensus. This means that, if there is



one elder who disagrees with a proposal before the Elder Council, the proposal will be set aside until all of the elders experience a similar leading by the Lord.

## **49. ELDERS**

FC seeks to be a New Testament Church committed to the teachings of the Bible. No other authority or tradition is to guide the means, faith or structure of the Lord Jesus Christ's Church. The administrative and pastoral structure for a New Testament Church is to utilize a plurality of leadership. FC follows this scriptural instruction. To achieve this New Testament model, FC requires qualified men to serve as an Elder Council.

- A. These men must meet specific moral and spiritual qualifications before they serve (1 Tim. 3:1-7).
- B. They must be publicly installed into office (1 Tim. 5:22; Acts 14:23).
- C. They must be motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do their work (Acts 20:28).
- D. After review, examination and appointment, men affirmed by FC to serve as elders shall constitute the Elder Council. To effectively perform their duties, the Elder Council needs the prayers, support and assent of members of FC (1 Tim. 5:17-18; Heb. 13:17).
- E. FC is called upon to honor their Elder Council and to protect them against false accusations (1 Tim. 5:19).
- F. Finally, if an elder falls into sin, and continues to sin, he must be publicly rebuked (1 Tim. 5:20).

## **50. DEACONS**

Deacons are the servant-ministers of the church. Their purpose is to relieve the elders of some of the multitude of practical duties involved in caring for the flock. Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the flock's physical welfare. Deacons have the honor of modeling, for the local church and the lost world, God's compassion, kindness, mercy and love. As the church compassionately cares for people's needs, the world sees a visible display of Christ's love, which will draw the lost to our Savior. Deacons are to be an example of commitment, unity, and harmony in their service. Additional information is contained in the FC Deacon Handbook.

## **51. BAPTISM**

Jesus commanded all believers to be baptized (Matt. 28:19). Baptism is a public demonstration of a believer's identification with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Being symbolic in nature, there is no saving value in water baptism itself. Baptism follows a believable profession of faith (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 32-33; 1 Cor. 1:16). Baptism is performed by immersion in water (John 3:23; Acts 8:36, 38-39; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). It demonstrates a believer's obedience to Christ's command (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38).

## **52. LORD'S SUPPER**

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ (Matt. 26:26-29). It is an important act of worship. Only those who are believers in Christ—Christians—should participate in the Lord's Supper. In this act, believers use the symbol of the fruits of the vine, and

unleavened bread to commemorate the blood and body of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:20-34; 1 Cor. 10:16-17). The Bible does not provide specific guidelines regarding the frequency of observation of the Lord's Supper.

### **53. EQUIPPING BELIEVERS**

The church's priority to equip believers for ministry is accomplished through the exegetical preaching and teaching of the Bible (Eph. 4:11-16). An exegetical approach to preaching and teaching, in which we draw our beliefs directly from the actual words of scripture, is used in an unparalleled way to win the lost and disciple the saved (Matt. 28:19; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We place our emphasis on scripture being the tool that God uses to develop our faith and equip us for ministry (Rom. 10:17).

### **54. WITNESSING**

Every Christian is given the privilege of sharing their relationship with Christ (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 4:1-2). Christian unity is one of the primary means by which we reveal the reality of Christ (John 17:23). Additionally, we are to bear witness, by lifestyle and through words. The Holy Spirit empowers our witness and uses it in the salvation of others (Acts 1:8; 10:44).

### **55. CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

God requires church discipline (Matt. 18:15-17). The purpose of church discipline is for believers to hold one another accountable to live godly lives. The goal of church discipline is twofold—restoration of fellowship between the sinning Christian and God, and between the sinning Christian and his/her fellow believers (James 5:20). Other goals for church discipline include: keeping sin from spreading to others; protecting the purity of the church so that Christ will not be dishonored (Rom. 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:6; Heb. 12:15; Rev. 2:20). We should never lose sight that where there are issues of conduct on which Christians may legitimately disagree, a wide degree of initial tolerance is required (Rom. 14:1-23). We are not seeking to punish the offender out of a desire for vengeance, but we are seeking to restore and heal (2 Cor. 2:5-11). Additional policy regarding church discipline is contained in Article II, Section 6 of the FC Constitution & Bylaws.

### **56. DENOMINATIONALISM AND DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION**

First and foremost we are Christians. Affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention affords us the opportunity, as a local fellowship of believers, to be a part of the cooperative work in evangelism and missions with a larger body of believers. This affiliation should not generate a denominational bias that interferes with the larger work of the Kingdom of God. The design of the Southern Baptist Convention permits the local church to maintain its independence and autonomy in government and ministry.